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## Fire safety

Cartwright pleads for  
better practices.  
Page 2

## Active fun

Sign up for  
SportsFest begun.  
Page 5.

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MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

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# 'We're in a losing battle'

**LAURA BARTON**  
Postmedia Network

Port Colborne fire Chief Tom Cartwright says messages of fire safety are falling on deaf ears.

The chief shared an emotional plea about the importance of fire safety at last Monday night's city council meeting.

The number of calls about fires that Port Colborne Fire and Emergency Services responded to last month alone sits at 83, he said.

That and the fire which took the lives of four people in December spurred him to write to the Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal.

He read what he wrote to council.

"Enough is enough. People are dying and significant proactive action needs to be done," Cartwright read from the letter.

He wrote to the fire marshal about how fire safety is preached, but also how he feels there's been a noticeable silence from the ones telling him and other municipal fire services to spread this message.

Media as well, he said, is lacking in fire safety messaging and typically only talks about deaths instead of how to prevent them.

His frustration and sadness showed through his words and his tone of voice.

"Silence will not help us prevent these occurrences," he said.

"I will be speaking very loudly about matters such as these and will be pushing as many buttons as it takes to make a difference."

Cartwright said he sent the letter via email to the office two weeks ago, and while he has heard back, he hasn't heard back from as far high



ALLAN BENNETT/POSTMEDIA FILE PHOTO

Port Colborne Chief Tom Cartwright, at right following a fire that claimed four lives in December, says 'people don't seem to care' about fire safety and that firefighters are losing ground in getting the message out about fire safety.

up as he'd like.

The brunt of his letter

touches on how someone must care about the loss of

life, the risk for emergency services, the pain and suffering and financial hardships that citizens and those who help them face.

After reading the letter, he said he hesitates to say that people don't care, but it's what it feels like from his perspective. Despite fire safety messaging that is still out there, people are just dying.

"We feel like we're in a losing battle. We don't seem to be gaining any ground. People aren't listening to us. People don't seem to care," he said.

"They need to understand that they're going to die in fires or we're going to continue to drag people out of buildings if they don't get on board with fire safety."

This problem, he said, is not just a Port Colborne problem, but a provincial, if not national, problem.

He said he's proud of the way his crew members have

handled what they've had to deal with, especially concerning the December fire. He commended the city, saying it has gone "above and beyond" to make sure firefighters are getting the professional help they need to cope.

Council members expressed their gratitude for the service fire personnel provided and vowed to stand behind Cartwright in this endeavour.

"Let's create that network, get that message out, do the very best we can to make sure these events don't happen again," Ward 2 Coun. Angie Desmarais said.

She said it's time to help the fire department as much as they have helped the community.

The rest of council agreed that ensuring fire safety messaging is clear to residents is key and added it as a top agenda item to its strategic planning meeting for 2017.

## Garbage dumpers trashing Port Colborne trails

**LAURA BARTON**  
Postmedia Network

Port Colborne councilors say trail trash is becoming a problem.

At last Monday night's city council meeting, Ward 2 Coun. Angie Desmarais brought up the issue for discussion, saying residents have been alerting her to garbage strewn all along recreation trails.

"We've had some instances of dumping along the trails," she said.

From pictures she's seen and taken herself, including of the Friendship Trail, it's not just typical litter that one

might find, but rather large items in large piles.

She said garbage bags, such as those that would be left curbside on garbage day, have been dumped, along with other items. Construction debris and roofing materials are also things she's heard about being in the mix.

This issue, she said, should be taken seriously, especially as the city invites people to try out the trails and continue to use them.

"We need to be watching this more carefully."

Her question to city staff was what residents can do about the trash they see dumped.

"The best thing to do for any resident who notices dumping on the trails is simply to call our 24/7 number, which is 905-835-9079. Somebody is on call on a regular basis," said Ron Hanson, director of engineering and operations.

He said during this time of the year, trails aren't monitored as regularly as they are during the summer season. In the summer, city workers are out on the trails daily and doing maintenance.

Dan Aquilina, director of planning and development, said there is something else that can be done, too.

"The other thing we have under our bylaw is if you see

someone dumping and you can provide evidence, then you need to inform bylaw staff," he said. "When we review and determine and can actually find out the person or persons that dumped the garbage, they will be fined."

Chief administrative officer Scott Lacey cautioned, however, to not intervene in these matters and said another option is to call Crime Stoppers.

At the end of the discussion, Desmarais said the public is now "armed" and will know what to do in these situations.

Barton@postmedia.com  
Twitter: @LauraBarton



SUPPLIED PHOTO

In this photo is a pile of trash left along the Friendship Trail. Illegal dumping is becoming a problem along Port Colborne's trails.

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# LOCAL NEWS

## Snow plows taking out mailboxes

Ward 4 Councillor Barbara Butters brought up concerns over snow plows taking out mailboxes and who replaces them.

Her concern wasn't about the blade hitting the boxes, but rather snow, slush and ice flying off plow blades.

While she understands when a snow plow blade hits a mailbox it gets replaced, there is no such policy for if the snow itself is the culprit. She said the driver handling the area in question is also potentially driving too quickly while clearing the snow, causing even more problems.

Ron Harrison, director of engineering and operations, said sometimes the problem is linked to rotted posts or old mailboxes, so it becomes a matter of determining where the fault lies. Council has agreed to review

the policy.

## Church beautifying downtown core

St. James and St. Brendan Anglican Church officially shared with city council last Monday night its plans to beautify a nearby property.

The plan, which has been in the works since last year, is taking a couple nearby pieces of derelict land and transforming it into a park the entire community can use.

Rev. Canon Robert Hurkmans presented the plan to council, explaining the church's application for grants and how it's reaching out to local businesses and the community at large to help with the project.

Parishioners of the church, he said, have already raised \$100,000 for the project. Council gave input into what

they would like to see in the park, including nautical themes.

More information about the project can be found at [bleeshty.ca](http://bleeshty.ca).

## Chief building officer says goodbye

After five years working for the City of Port Colborne, chief building officer Lyle Merritt is retiring from his position.

Mayor John Maloney praised Merritt's wealth of knowledge and integrity, saying he is going to be missed.

Maloney and chief administrative officer Scott Luey presented Merritt with a plaque of recognition and a picture of the Port Colborne harbour at last Monday's city council meeting.

Merritt called working with



the city a privilege and that he always strives to make it a safer and healthier place to live, work and play.

## Towing company asks for trucks to be considered emergency vehicles

Tom James of Tom James Towing came before city council to request that his trucks be considered emergency vehicles.

The request comes after a couple of his drivers have had problems finding adequate, at-home parking for the trucks that would still allow them to get to an emergency scene on

time.

For the two employees in question, the trucks are too big to fit in their driveways, so they have been parking on the road. Bylaw officers have informed them they cannot do this.

City staff will come back to council with a report outlining parking options for the trucks.

## Pleasant Beach Road garbage problem being addressed

Ron Harrison, director of engineering and operations, said an ad hoc committee was formed and has been meeting to deal with the ongoing issue of garbage dumping on Pleasant Beach Road.

During the summer months, beachgoers add their garbage to bins set out for residents in the area, which causes a problem of overflowing at the entrance to

the beach.

The committee met in December with councillors, residents and regional staff and it is working on divvying up waste areas, getting proper containers and coming up with proactive solutions for the issues.

The next meeting is in early February.

## Golden Puck makes donation to Vale Centre

John Van Gool, president of the Golden Puck Hockey Committee, presented Mayor John Maloney with a \$10,000 pledge for Vale Health and Wellness Centre.

The Golden Puck Hockey Tournament is returning for another year — it runs Feb. 24 to 26 — and has been renamed in memory of Van Gool's father, Martin Van Gool.

  
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# INPORT NEWS

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**POSTMEDIA**

## 've been thinking of unity

REV. THOMAS P. RATH  
First Evangelical Lutheran Church

Last week was the week of prayer for Christians unity.

The Port Colborne and Wainfleet Clergy Fellowship held a week of noon-hour worship services as part of that observance. Technically the week of prayer for Christian unity runs from Jan. 18 to Jan. 25, but when those fall in the middle of the week like they did this year the Clergy Fellowship makes an adjustment so the services run from Monday to Friday. This year it was January 16-20.

Every year the World Council of Churches, representing more than half a billion of the world's Christians, and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, representing the Roman Catholic Church prepare resources around a theme that is used around the world. This is a symbol of unity not just between a few local churches, but between billions of Christians across the globe.

This year's theme was reconciliation. the love of Christ compels us.

It's based on a passage from Second Corinthians in the New Testament (2 Cor 5:14-20) which says the love of Christ urges us on and he died for all. It says God reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

I've got to say, we Christians often do a pretty lousy job and showing or working toward unity, at least from my perspective. I know I'm pretty lousy at it. We have the Port Colborne and Wainfleet Clergy Fellowship which I rarely attend. We had a week of worship services praying for our unity as Christians and I didn't go to a single one. I announced in church that they were happening, but I didn't go.

My main reasons for not attending either the clergy fellowship or the joint worship services are, I'll freely admit, a combination of laziness and forgetfulness. When I do go I enjoy my time there and my spirit is fed by

it. There have been times when I have fully intended to go to the clergy fellowship meeting, but completely forgot and kicked myself afterward.

But I pledge to do better. I've done it before, after a time away from the clergy fellowship, gone back for a time and only to stop again. I can see how it's easy to get out of a good habit. It happens with me and exercise. It's good for me, I don't hate it, but I get out of the habit and it's hard to get back into it.

People who go to church regularly for years stop going for one reason or another and just get out of the habit. Perhaps it's just a matter of making up your minds to start again.

As for the unity thing, the Love of Christ compels us. Lutherans around the world are commemorating the 500 anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation this year. Last October a joint commemoration event and prayer service took place in Sweden. It was attended by Pope Francis and representa-

tives of Lutheran Churches around the world where they signed a joint declaration stating what unites our traditions is greater than what divides us. Pope Francis prayed for the Holy Spirit to "prepare us to repent for the dividing walls that we, and our forebears, have built, and equip us for common witness and service in the world."

It's really a poor witness to our common faith in Jesus Christ that we find it so difficult to be united in those things we have in common and find it so easy to divide ourselves based on some things we disagree on.

Tonight I'm taking some of the young people from our church and their friends to a joint youth group that we hold with the Anglicans in town. I don't know if it's a small step or a big step, but I hope the kids there get the idea that in Jesus we are one. I'm going to try to make it a part of my life to try to isolate myself so much, and not to be so forgetful and lazy. I want to make a point of living into the unity that we share as Christians.

## Fear most common reason for dog aggression



Body posture is the first sign that your dog may be fearful. The head will lower, the ears will flatten, the hair on the back may rise and the tail will tuck. At times, there are more subtle signs such as squinting, dilated pupils, licking of the nose and lips, yawning, or turning the head away. The fearful dog will often start panting, followed by the obvious lip curling, growling and barking.

What should your response be when you encounter a fearful dog? Actually the question is what not to do. Never look a fearful dog in the eyes. Do not speak to the dog in a high-pitched tone and do not approach the dog. These actions make a dog more uneasy. It is best to ignore a dog acting fearful, and the dog will either retreat or come up to you when the situation appears to be less stressful.

If you are the owner of a dog that is acting fearful, try your best not to "reinforce" the dog's behaviour. In other words, if you hold your dog close and cuddly and talk to him in a comforting voice, you are rewarding your dog. The dog then



associates its aggression with a comforting response from the owner. This will encourage your dog to actually repeat the fear aggression response, and this embeds this action into the dog with time, which can be dangerous. On the other hand, never punish your dog in this situation because it will destroy the relationship you have with your dog. Try to remain calm, as your dog will sense any distress and the aggression may escalate.

Rather than trying to treat this problem yourself, it is best to seek out trainers that can offer desensitization and counter-conditioning. These are techniques that you can learn to do daily with your dog to eliminate the fear. While you and your dog are going through the training process, try to avoid the situations that result in fear. A good trainer will let you know when your dog is ready to face the fearful situations.

Story continued on Page 7

One of my more challenging exam room events is when an aggressive dog is presented for a problem in the mouth.

"Doctor, Cujo is pawing at his mouth and seems to have a problem in there. Can you have a look?"

My client is asking this question while trying desperately to restrain Cujo on his leash as he is lunging forward barking and growling. Cujo is showing a sincere desire to make some sort of not-so-nice contact with me.

We have some very safe sedatives that help us examine difficult pets, but the most common reason for aggression, particularly in dogs, is fear, and so we call it "fear aggression."

This is a very instinctive response in the canine. When fear is sensed, aggression is the reaction with these dogs. Dogs may be fearful of situations (such as a visit to the veterinary clinic), of certain people (your ex), or of other dogs.

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# Walls are coming down

Postmedia Network

The walls are finally coming down for the dilapidated Wall's Furniture store on Welland Street in Port Colborne.

Last Wednesday work began on the demolition of the building and will take about three to four weeks to complete. The vacant building has been a cause of concern for councillors for a number of years. The recently formed East Village Neighbourhood Improvement Task Force has been working toward addressing the eyesore.

Port Colborne Mayor John Maloney said he is optimistic about the demolition. The land will provide space for a new venture in East Village. "This building has long been empty and unfortunately, has fallen into serious disrepair in the past years," Maloney said in a release.

The building has not only been a site for sore eyes, but also a safety hazard. Sherry Hanson, supervisor by-law enforcement division, said the process to demolish a building can be a lengthy one. Staff have to first issue a Property Standards Order in an attempt to resolve any



MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Demolition of Wallis Furniture store on Welland Street in Port Colborne began last Wednesday.

issues with the owner of the building. Hanson said once the order has been exhausted and nothing more can be done, the city moves forward with reviewing the building.

A structural engineer has

to inspect the building before demolition can occur. The contractor also has to remove any materials inside the building.

Neal Schoen, chair of the Improvement Task Force,

said the new Property Maintenance By-Law and additional funds from the city will help city staff enforce by-laws and property standards. The by-law has enabled staff to clean up debris, disrepair

and hazards in a more timely fashion.

"This work continues as other negligent property owners can expect similar action if their properties fall into disrepair," Schoen said.

## Variety of activities offered at SportsFest

MICHELLE ALLENBERG  
Postmedia Network

It's time to get active and sign up to participate in the 18th annual Port Colborne SportsFest.

The weekend long event is running from Feb. 10 to Feb. 12. It includes a slew of activities for families from music trivia to lacrosse.

With about 15 different events there is something for everyone to enjoy. Michelle Cuthbert, who is in the city's marketing, customer relations and communications department, said people don't need to be sporty to enjoy SportsFest.

Cuthbert said there are a few new additions to this year's SportsFest, including beer tasting. Saturday night Canadise Restaurant is hosting the beer tasting event, rather than the typical wine and cheese tasting of previous years. Cuthbert said choosing to have beer instead of wine speaks to the diversity of what Niagara has to offer. She said there are so many different breweries in the region it makes sense to showcase that aspect of Niagara.

City staff are hoping for snow the weekend of the event so the annual Snow Golf Tournament at Wasky Run Golf Course can still be held.

"I mean they can probably recoup it to mud golf this year ... it will be interesting if the ground is not frozen," Cuthbert said with a laugh.

Although SportsFest is organized by the city, local businesses and community members are what make the event a success. Cuthbert said the events wouldn't be possible without places to host the various events.

What has also made it a success throughout the years is the participation of the community. Cuthbert said having a winter event allows for another opportunity for the people of Port Colborne to come together.

"I think we are all kind of experiencing the winter blues ... so SportsFest is just that a success for the city to encourage everyone to go visit local businesses and activities," she said.

# Port Colborne neighbourhood plagued by drainage problems

BARBARA DARTON  
Postmedia Network

Residents of three Barrick Road homes in Port Colborne are more than a little frustrated with their rear neighbours atop the hill on Hillcrest Road.

Linda Niece, on behalf of herself, Maaike Langenberg and Sylvia Smith, addressed city council last Monday night about drainage issues they have been facing.

"Our drainage has and is continuously affected and compromised by the neighbours behind us," said Niece.

She told council about a fence and a pool that she says both violate bylaws and has obstructed swales and catch basins on their properties.

The issue is something she and the other residents involved say has been ongoing



BARBARA DARTON

for more than two years and they are fed up with waiting for the city to do something.

Their response was to submit to council a petition under the Drainage Act.

"We submitted a petition because the city will not accept responsibility to ensure that we have an outlet into this catch basin and swale."

She cited a number of sections in bylaws and the Hillcrest Road subdivision agreement that she says proves her neighbours are in the wrong and should be responsible for drainage problems.

While the issue has been brought up with the city, Niece and the other residents are not satisfied with the response from drainage superintendent Henri Benneke, which said the city had done its due diligence and the rest is a civil matter. Because of that, she and the other residents want a drainage engineer to come and handle the issue.

"We do not want mediation. We have been dealing with this since 2014," she said.

"Our neighbours behind us have always compromised our drainage. We want a professional to come to the area and assist our entire neighbourhood."

Chris Lee, manager of projects and design, standing in for Benneke who was unable to make it to council, cautioned the residents against hiring an engineer.

"The residents need to understand that the entire cost of that exercise is going to fall back on them. The city will not be billed for any of it," he said.

Going about hiring a drainage engineer, he said, could cost somewhere about \$50,000.

Ward 2 Coun. Angie Desmarais offered the solution of having all the involved property owners, their ward councillors, city staff and the

drainage superintendent get together to inspect the properties to see where the issues lie and in that way potentially find a solution.

Niece's stipulation with that suggestion is to ensure that qualified professionals be on site who understand and can properly assess the situation. Desmarais and other councillors said Benneke is recognized as one of the top drainage experts in the province.

"I think we can get to a solution without anyone bearing an unreasonable cost," Desmarais said.

Council decided to arrange a meeting with councillors, city staff, including the drainage superintendent, and the residents as soon as possible.

barton@postmedia.ca  
Twitter: @BarbDarton

# NIAGARA 2041

## Fostering an Environment for Economic Prosperity



### Get Involved in Niagara's Future: Attend Public Information Centre #4

In the next 25 years, Niagara is expected to grow, bringing a possible 168,000 new residents and 79,000 new jobs to the Region. This anticipated growth results in a population level of 610,000 and an employment level of 264,000 by year 2041.

Niagara Region is making sure we're prepared for this growth through four projects that will help us plan where and how that growth will occur, and how it will be accommodated. This Public Information Centre will focus on one of the four projects.



### HOW WE GO:

The Transportation Master Plan will look at how we currently travel in and around Niagara and how we can improve our transportation systems, including options for walking, cycling and public transit, to better serve Niagara's future needs.

### Get involved:

The Transportation Master Plan is nearing completion. Since the last PICs held in November/December of 2016, the Project Team has developed preliminary recommendations for Niagara Region's transportation system. Find out how the transportation system is being improved and what benefits there are to the networks (walking, cycling, transit, road), to economic efficiency and to the overall transportation experience.

Residents are invited to attend a Public Information Centre in their community to learn more about these recommendations and to have your voice heard.

#### Feb. 21, 2017

Welland  
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60 East Main St.  
5:30 - 8 p.m.  
Presentation at 6:30 p.m.

#### Feb. 22, 2017

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Irene Locke Program Room  
425 Carlton St.  
5:30 - 8 p.m.  
Presentation at 6:30 p.m.

#### March 1, 2017

Grimsby  
Town Hall Council Chambers  
160 Livingston Ave.  
5:30 - 8 p.m.  
Presentation at 6:30 p.m.

#### March 2, 2017

Niagara Falls  
Gale Centre Memorial Room  
5152 Thorold Stone Rd.  
5:30 - 8 p.m.  
Presentation at 6:30 p.m.

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# Handling an aggressive dog

## FROM PAGE 4

The most serious of all dog bites are often to children. It is important to remember that young children do not recognize the early signs of fear and will readily approach a fearful dog. Remember not to confuse dominance aggression with fear aggression. Dominance aggression is a problem with dogs that are dominant over the members of the household and are often large breed dogs. Treatment for dominance is much different than fear. Any dog that is known to have any form of aggression should never be left alone with children.

If you are having problems with your dog, whether it be aggression to other dogs on your walk, or inappropriate response to a new person, do not just accept that the way your dog has to be.

Instead, have a serious con-

versation with your veterinarian about the problem. Take your dog for a physical exam to ensure that there is no medical condition that could cause the aggression. If the fear aggression is severe, mild anti-anxiety medications can help get your dog through the initial stages of the demonstration and counter-conditioning retraining process.

Learning great retraining techniques and applying them to your dog takes much time and patience. However, it is worth it if your dog is suffering from fear aggression. Thus, the more time you put into helping your dog surmount and eliminate his fear, the more benefits you will receive with a happy, healthy and safe pet.

— Ron Mergl is a veterinarian with a practice in Niagara Falls.



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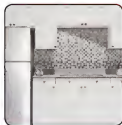


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# Marineland cruelty case deferred to February

JOHN LAW  
Postmedia Network

Marineland will return to court Feb. 23 to answer to 11 charges of animal cruelty.

Lawyers for the Niagara Falls tourist attraction requested and received a deferral during a brief appearance Thursday morning at Provincial Offences Court.

Marineland owner John Holer did not attend.

On Nov. 10, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) "responded to concerns about the park's animals and conducted an investigation alongside a veterinarian. As a result, five charges were laid involving the care of peacocks, guinea hens and black bears.

Earlier this month, an additional six counts of animal cruelty were laid



MIKE DINIATTA/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Animal cruelty charges against Marineland will return to court Feb. 23 after lawyers for the park were granted a deferral.

involving the park's elk and deer.

None of the animals were removed from the facility.

"We want to reassure the public that the (OSPCA) will continue to make sure these animals are getting the care they require," said OSCPA senior inspector Steve Toyn in a media release Jan. 31.

In emailed responses to the charges, Marineland said they stem from complaints by a former employee who was fired for "poor performance and inappropriate behaviour," and that the OSCPA is "conducting a publicity campaign at the behest of a band of discredited activists."

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# LOCAL NEWS

## Trump travel ban may have a ripple effect on Niagara

ALISON LANGLEY  
Postmedia Network

President Donald Trump's executive order last Friday limiting access to the United States by travellers from predominantly-Muslim countries could have a ripple effect in Niagara.

While border officials could not confirm if anyone had been denied entry at Niagara border crossings over the weekend due to the controversial travel restrictions, several posts on social media claimed a number of people living in the U.S. with Green Cards have been refused entry back home after visiting Niagara.

One message on Twitter, using the hashtag #Muslimban, claimed two Yemeni natives, who held Green Cards, were denied entry into the U.S. at Niagara Falls on Saturday. Another tweet said a Somali doctor working in Buffalo, N.Y., on a Green Card who was in Niagara Falls for the weekend was also denied entry.



RYAN KAMU/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Demonstrators chant at protests against U.S. President Donald Trump's executive order banning travel from seven Muslim-majority countries continued at Los Angeles International Airport.

Trump imposed a temporary ban on all refugees and an indefinite one on Syrian refugees; he also imposed 90-day restrictions

on travellers from seven predominantly-Muslim countries including Iraq, Iran, Syria, Yemen, Libya and Somalia.

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# Lack of staff making hospitals dirty: CUPE

RAY SPITERI  
Postmedia Network

With provincial funding falling, the union representing about 35,000 hospital staff in Ontario says concerns are growing that hospitals don't have the capacity and enough cleaning staff to keep bedrails, mattresses, taps, door handles and chairs sterilized and bacteria-free.

The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, the hospital division of Canadian Union of Public Employees, is hosting media conferences in 20 cities across the province to question whether hospitals are clean enough to keep deadly bacteria from infecting already ill and immune-compromised patients.

CUPE surveyed hospital-sector members on cuts to environmental cleaning.

A study (Hospital-Acquired Infections: Stop Preventable Deaths) that melds the survey findings with recent public-health agency and other research reports was released during a media conference in Niagara Falls Tuesday.

The union said significant provincial funding cuts have resulted in high hospital bed occupancy levels, overcrowding and a rapid turnover of patients.

"All these are factors associated with the spread of hospital-acquired infections," the union's president and hospital cleaner Nicholas Black.



The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions is going across Ontario spreading its message of the risk of increasing hospital infections due to ongoing reductions on cleaning staff. The union held a media conference in Niagara Falls this week.

JULIE JOSEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

"Overcrowded hospitals and insufficient staff hampers our efforts to keep up with the cleaning and sterilizing of patient rooms and common areas. Housekeepers fear the cuts create too many opportunities for the spread of infection."

According to the union, about 10 per cent of adults in Canadian hospitals have a hospital-acquired infection.

"Approximately 3,200 Ontario patients will die from a hospital-acquired infection in 2017, while about 2,000 people will die in automobile accidents, making (hospital-acquired infections) a leading cause of death and one that is largely preventable," said Black.

Louis Rodrigues, first vice-president for the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, said scientists and doctors have raised concerns about the growing resistance to antibiotic treatment of hospital-acquired infections.

"They say the risks are growing and the superbug infections are getting worse," he said.

"But hospital environmental service staff believe that government and hospital policies are making this growing threat even worse. Patient safety and reduc-



RODRIGUES



BLACK

ing the risk of acquiring a and transmitting infection should be the priority, not cutting costs on environmental cleaning."

Rodrigues said the union's outreach is not meant to target specific hospitals, but is meant to send a message to the provincial government.

"We see that this is no fault of the hospitals when they're funding is shorter and shorter," he said.

"Their budgets are shrinking, but there's more need for hospitals and less and less money all the time. Our

population is getting older, hospitals are overcrowded, they need more money to do the work that they're doing."

Angela Zangari, executive vice-president of finance and operations at Niagara Health System, said its goal is to provide the best possible patient care while also ensuring heightened infection prevention and control measures.

"We continue to maintain high standards with our cleaning, based on best practices, and we continue to provide expertise and advice in this area to other hospitals across the country," she said.

"We conduct regular audits of our environments and cleaning process. And

we have standardized processes for regular cleaning and isolation cleaning."

Zangari said NHS's environmental services department also works in partnership with its infection prevention and control team to "maintain these high standards."

"Our staffing levels were increased when we opened our new hospital in St. Catharines, and the staffing levels across our sites have been maintained since then," she said.

"Our team in our antibiotic stewardship program is focused on ensuring the responsible use of antibiotics and reducing the risk of resistant infections."

rspiteri@postmedia.com

## 'I personally think this decision will not serve any security purpose'

EFFECT FROM A13

A Canada Border Services Agency spokesperson said Sunday there had not been "significant increases in traffic" at Niagara border crossings in the previous 72 hours.

Officials with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection in Buffalo, N.Y., could not be reached for comment Sunday.

"There's so much confusion right now," said Sean Polden, an immigration consultant from St. Catharines. "Everything

seems to be up in the air. Until things are more formalized and the risk is known, I think it would be important for people to just stay put and, fortunately, Niagara Falls has a lot of hotels."

Polden wasn't aware of any cases of people stranded in Niagara and said it could be difficult to determine how many may be here.

"Traditionally, immigrant communities are very connected. Even if some end up being stranded here, the

majority will have a backup option such as friends or families they can go to for support. We might not necessarily see them stay in Niagara."

Canadian immigration lawyer Julie Taub said the local fallout from Trump's immigration restrictions may take time to unfold. But it's likely, the Ottawa lawyer said, that more refugees will land here, and more will attempt to cross the border illegally into the U.S. from Canada.

Ottawa immigration law-

yer Hadi Hakimi said many of the people he spoke to Saturday were upset and confused by Trump's edict.

"I personally think this decision will not serve any security purpose," Hakimi said. "Banning people based on country of birth, religion, nationality, it's ridiculous."

The Afghan-born Hakimi said he spoke Saturday with one man, a dual U.S.-Iranian citizen, who was concerned he might not be able to return to the U.S. if he travelled to Iran.

Under one interpretation of Trump's new order, tens of thousands of Canadians with dual citizenship from one of the seven countries face a 90-day travel ban.

Transport Minister Marc Garneau said on Twitter late Saturday that the Canadian government was seeking more information from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Department of Transportation. "We are in contact with U.S. DHS and U.S. DOT to get more clarity on the impacts of the restric-

tions on travels. We will be providing further information to Canadians as it is available."

It's possible that Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen will fall under the temporary ban if he's not travelling on a diplomatic passport. Hussen, who was appointed to cabinet earlier this month, was born in Somalia and came to Canada as a refugee.

—with files from Andrew Duffy,  
Postmedia Network  
alangley@postmedia.com

## LOCAL NEWS

## NPCA lawsuits piling up

**BILL SAWCHUK**  
Postmedia Network

Controversy at Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority is keeping lawyers busy — to the point where you need a scorecard to keep track of who is suing whom.

Among them, Bill Montgomery, a marketing specialist from Niagara-on-the-Lake, launched a defamation and slander lawsuit against activist Ed Smith and two regional councillors for St. Catharines, Brian Heit and Kelly Edgar, because of a report that questions NPCA's practices and possible conflicts of interest.

The report names Montgomery's companies as being involved.

Montgomery's statement of claim said that by distributing the report — which doesn't name an author — Smith, Edgar and Heit committed libel and slander against him and his companies. He wants \$3 million with a further \$500,000 in punitive damages.

In another legal action, Montgomery settled a lawsuit for breach of contract, defamation and intentional interference with business relations against the NPCA and its charitable foundation. That settlement is the subject of a non-disclosure agreement, although *The Standard* has learned some of the details.

A second lawsuit involves the conservation authority and its former CAO, Carmen D'Angelo. They launched their own separate defamation suit against Smith. They each want \$100,000 from Smith.

In addition, Montgomery sent a letter of caution, often the first step in a lawsuit, to World MPP Cindy Foster and "her supervisor" NDP party leader Andrea Horwath in November. In that letter, Montgomery claimed Foster "supports" the report, which is a "vicious libel of me personally and professionally."

He warns they could be liable



Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority administration offices on Thorold Road in Welland.



HEIT

for damages.

**Montgomery vs. Smith, Heit and Edgar**

Montgomery — who runs a number of companies under the names Value Media Corp. and Cornerstone Sponsorship

Management, Stream Three Inc. and Income Group — has filed a statement of claim in the defamation lawsuit against Smith, Heit and Edgar.

Two of his companies Value Media and Cornerstone figure in the report distributed.

None of his allegations have been proven in court. Smith has been unapologetic for distributing the 45-page report, which is titled A Call for Accountability at the NPCA, and called a press conference late last year to reiterate the point.

Contacted two weeks ago,

Smith said his lawyer advised him not to speak about the lawsuit filed by Montgomery.

Montgomery's statement of claim said the report stings out his companies as an example of "illegal management" at the conservation authority in awarding a contract to an outside source.

The statement of claim said the defendants knew, or should have known, the accusations were false and that they would destroy Montgomery's reputation, Value Media's reputation and Stream Three's reputation.

The statement of claim said Smith, Edgar and Heit published the false allegations and repeated them frequently, in order to create a backdrop that Montgomery was undertaking "illegal administrative conduct."

After a Niagara Region com-



EDGAR

mittee meeting two weeks week, Heit and Edgar both said they have been instructed not to comment on the lawsuit.

It is believed the lawsuit — and who will cover the costs of defending it — was the source of a heated

in-camera meeting at regional council last Thursday. Montgomery's statement of claim said that Smith, Heit and Edgar have an agenda to discredit NPCA.

The statement of claim said Heit and Edgar emailed the report to fellow councillors when the region was in the process of hiring D'Angelo as the region's CAO.

At the time, Heit told *The Standard* he was trying to convince his fellow councillors they should defer the decision to appoint a new CAO until the issues in the report, which are mostly based on D'Angelo's

tenure at NPCA, have been addressed more fully.

The statement of claim said the report alleges that another St. Catharines regional councillor, Andy Petrowski, is in an ownership position or operating position with Value Media, Income Group, Stream Three Inc. and Cornerstone Sponsorship Management.

Montgomery's statement of claim said that is not true. Montgomery's statement of claim said the report also alleges Petrowski used his influence and acted in a conflict of interest to secure on behalf of one of his businesses "to obtain a large contract" from NPCA in 2015.

Montgomery's statement of claim said it is false.

None of the allegations have been proven in court.

Regional Coun. Andy Petrowski is not associated with

our organization," Montgomery said in a written statement when contacted by *The Standard*. "Policy does not allow commenting on issues presently or previously before the courts, proprietary marketing strategies, or matters that may affect past or current clients."

When contacted, Petrowski said, "I am unable to comment because of potential litigation. Have a good day."

At a press conference at the end of the year, Smith said, "I stand by the research that went into the making of the report on the NPCA, and I am asking for a full response to the unanswered questions in that report."

While Montgomery said Petrowski isn't associated with his organization, the minutes of a Wainfleet council meeting in February 2013 show Petrowski appeared before the mayor and councillors to propose Wainfleet create a legal defence fund that would be run by Value Media Corp. The fund was to help smaller municipalities deal with the costs from a class-action lawsuit against wind turbine developers.

Petrowski's speaking notes are on file at Wainfleet township hall.

He said at the meeting he wasn't appearing as an elected official, but rather as a private citizen and a businessman.

"Our organization is committed to visit immediately with as many as possible of the 90-plus municipalities in Ontario that have publicly expressed their opposition to wind turbine," Petrowski's speaking notes said.

**Montgomery vs. NPCA, foundation**

In the second lawsuit, since settled with the help of a mediator, Montgomery filed a statement of claim against the conservation authority and its foundation after the conservation authority tried, in its estimation, to back out of a deal.

FILE PHOTO



SMITH

# Lawyers keeping busy with flurry of legal action

From Page 15

In addition, Montgomery wanted damages because he claimed the foundation gave an unfavourable business reference to a potential client, Niagara Region.

NPCA said last Monday that there is a non-disclosure agreement and it could not offer comment.

That dispute arose when

Montgomery made a proposal to NPCA in May 2015 for Cornerstone Sponsorship Management to sell advertising and sponsorships at NPCA's conservation areas. Montgomery's company would keep a portion of the sales, though how much was a matter of contention.

When the deal appeared to fall through, Mont-

gomery sued the conservation authority and its charitable arm, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation (NPCF), for \$4.23 million.

The statement of claim said the authority wanted to terminate the contract and have the retailer funds previously provided returned.

The statement of defence by NPCA and its foundation

said there never was a contract and, for all intents of purposes, the company didn't exist. Because the company didn't exist, it couldn't enter into a contract.

The foundation's lawyer also defended the alleged poor reference by saying if someone from the foundation communicated any information to anyone, at

any time, about Cornerstone, it was not defamatory but in fact truthful.

The lawsuit and its subsequent settlement drew the scrutiny of Smith, who, at a press conference in December, showed how much lawyer money was paid out.

While there is a non-disclosure agreement on some terms of settlement, Montgomery outlined how his suit against NPCA was settled in his statement of claim against Smith, Heit and Montgomery.

Cornerstone will work with the foundation on fundraising as originally agreed, the statement of claim said.

The settlement also makes clear that "as a result of litigation, no additional monies were paid by NPCF to the plaintiffs, beyond the originally agreed \$45,000 retainer," the statement of claim said.

There are two other conditions in the settlement according to the statement of claim.

First, Stream Three net will use the services of any regional councillor in its delivery of services to the foundation, and that Montgomery personally manage the program on behalf of foundation.

NPCA and D'Angelo vs. Smith

The lawsuit against Smith filed by NPCA and D'Angelo was filed at the end of December. Smith has been calling for a forensic audit of the conservation authority.

Michael Reles, communications specialist for NPCA, said the authority can't comment on matters of ongoing litigation. D'Angelo's office referred questions to the conservation authority.

The lawsuit seeks a total of \$200,000 from Smith, NPCA lawyer Robert Burns, of Broderick & Partners in Niagara Falls -- who is also representing D'Angelo -- sent Smith a letter of notice Nov. 14, with a list of demands.

The letter demanded Smith deliver a full and unqualified written apology for distributing the report. A second demand asked Smith to undertake confirming he will not distribute the document to anyone else or make similar statements about NPCA in the future. And, the letter demanded Smith provide the identity of the authors of the report.

"It is my intent to defend myself against this action to the fullest extent," Smith said at his press conference. "I have said it before and I will say it now -- this is governance run amok."

"That any government in Canada can sue a citizen for defamation, or even believes that it should, speaks of arrogance and a complete lack of understanding of the true principles of our democracy. The NPCA is using taxpayer funding to sue a citizen."

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